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CONNECTICUT DELEGATION URGES PRESIDENT OBAMA TO PROVIDE FEDERAL ASSISTANCE TO FAIRFIELD COUNTY STORM VICTIMS

Washington, D.C. – Senators Chris Dodd (D-CT) and Joe Lieberman (ID-CT) and the entire Connecticut Congressional delegation wrote to President Barack Obama yesterday urging him to reconsider FEMA's rejection of Connecticut's request for a federal disaster declaration for Fairfield County, which sustained severe weather damage, including from a tornado, on June 24, 2010. The delegation wrote in support of Governor Rell's appeal to FEMA for the declaration, which would provide for federal assistance to help communities, businesses, and residents affected by the severe storm.

The full text of the letter is below:

September 21, 2010

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama:

We write in strong support of the State of Connecticut's appeal for federal assistance for Fairfield County, which sustained tornado and storm damage on June 24, 2010 that greatly affected local governments, residents and businesses.

As you are aware, on June 24, 2010, during a severe storm that battered Southwestern Connecticut, an EF 1 Tornado touched down in the City of Bridgeport. Winds of 100 miles per hour devastated a quarter mile stretch of the city. Subsequent FEMA-verified damage to the area totaled more than \$2 million in public property damage, and \$1 million in individual property damage. Significant damage has also been documented in the towns of Stratford, Trumbull, Weston, and Easton.

These dollar amounts, while not astronomical, mean a tremendous amount to the communities affected. We believe that the circumstances in this case make clear that the federal government is uniquely capable to provide assistance, and should therefore reconsider its denial.

Regrettably, this is not the only significant weather incident that led to significant damage in the

area this year. In March, Fairfield County was granted a major disaster declaration, as well as Public and Individual Assistance, due to severe weather. At that time, FEMA recognized that “the resources of Connecticut and its municipalities have been overwhelmed by those events.” According to the Governor, FEMA officials are still in Fairfield County assisting with that incident. This should be a clear indication that the State and local governments are still over-extended and in need of federal assistance in this case.

In addition, in the absence of a county government structure the entire burden of funding repairs and clean up of this disaster fall directly on the State and local authorities. This is a difficult time for State and local budgets as many of the impacted cities were facing budget shortfalls prior to the disaster. Unforeseen and unavoidable costs such as those related to this disaster represent a further strain on those budgets and there is potential that services available to area residents may be limited at a time when the need is great.

In fact, 86 percent of the individuals impacted by the damage are considered low-income. Merely 17 percent had insurance to help cover the costs of such damage. Many of these individuals and families were renters, and given their income levels, it is not unlikely that many of them will be more dependent on City and State services for basic necessities unless federal assistance is provided.

In short, without federal assistance, the affected households and businesses will not have access to the financial resources that will allow them to pick themselves up, dust themselves off, and get to work rebuilding their lives. These are precisely the circumstances for which federal disaster assistance was intended, and we hope that you will reconsider FEMA’s decision.

Sincerely,

Christopher J. Dodd
Joseph I. Lieberman
Jim Himes

Rosa L. DeLauro
John B. Larson

Joe Courtney
Christopher S. Murphy

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